

## Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 SCEM-02 SCI-06 INT-08

DRC-01 /118 W

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R 141300Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1795

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENERGY GR

SUBJECT: REACTION TO INCREASED FUEL PRICES AND RESTRICTIONS

1. THESS WEEKEND PRESS DOMINATED BY REPORTS ON 65-68 PERCENT INCREASE IN GASOLINE PRICES AND NEW RESTRICTIONS ON CONSUMPTION OF GAS, FUEL OIL, AND ELECTRICITY. ONLY LOCAL EDITORIAL REACTION APPEARS IN "ELLINIKOS VORRAS" COLUMNS BY CHIEF EDITOR ELIAS KYROU AND EDITOR NICOLAOS MERTZOS ON JAN 13.

2. IN VIEW INCREASED PRICES, KYROU CRITICIZES CONTINUATION OF GOVERNMENT TAXES ON GASOLINE AND SUGGESTS INCREASES BE LEVIED INSTEAD ON LUXURIES SUCH AS WHISKY AND OTHER IMPORTED ITEMS. EDITORIAL FURTHER SUGGESTS THAT, FROM FOREIGN EXCHANGE POINT OF VIEW, RESTRICTIONS BE PLACED ON CONSUMPTION OF OTHER IMPORTS RATHER THAN FUEL. KYROU ALSO TAKES ISSUE WITH BLANKET RESTRICTION ON SALE OF HEATING OIL (MAZOUT) AFTER MARCH 15 AND ARGUES THAT PERIOD SHOULD BE EXTENDED FOR NORTHERN GREECE BECAUSE OF COLDER WEATHER HERE. CURRENT RESTRICTIONS, HE WRITES, WOULD CREATE SPECIAL HARDSHIP IN THIS AREA. MERTZOS ALSO ARGUES THAT IMPORT RESTRICTIONS SHOULD BE PLACED ON LUXURIES RATHER THAN ESSENTIAL FUEL

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AND EDITORIALIZES THAT GREEKS CANNOT AFFORD TO SERVE

IMPORTED WHISKY UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. COMMENT: LOCAL RESIDENTS HAVE NOT FAILED TO NOTE THAT GREEK GASOLINE PRICES (OVER \$2.00 PER U.S. GALLON) NOW ALMOST DOUBLE THOSE ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE AND APPEAR TO BLAME GOVERNMENT FOR PASSING ON HIGH TAXES TO CONSUMER. NUMBER OF OWNERS HAVE ALREADY CONFIDED PLANS TO SELL LARGE CARS, AND CONGEN BELIEVES MANY PRIVATE VEHICLES LIKELY TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM CIRCULATION, SINCE OWNERS UNLIKELY TO CONTINUE PAYING MONTHLY CIRCULATION FEES (10-25 DOLLARS DEPENDING ON HORSEPOWER) IF COST OF GASOLINE EXORBITANT. THIS AND OTHER ECONOMIC STRESSES AT CONSUMER LEVEL IN NORTHERN GREECE BEGINNING TO ASSUME POLITICAL DIMENSION AS ADVERSE COMPARISONS DRAWN BETWEEN PINCHES UNDER NEW ANDROITSOPOULOS REGIME AND PREVIOUS CONDITIONS, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO UNDERLYING CAUSES.  
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## Message Attributes

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